

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 NSC-07

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DODE-00 OPR-02 A-01 SY-10 OC-06 CCO-00 DRC-01 ACDA-19

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5414

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 4008

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS PINS CB

SUBJECT: FALL OF OUDONG

1. LATEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF OUDONG, ABOUT 35 KILOMETERS NORTH OF PHNOM PENH, IS NOW VIRTUALLY ENTIRELY IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY, WHO IS BKING BUILDINGS AND ATTEMPTING TO REMOVE THE POPULATION (ESTIMATED AT 20,000). THE TOWN WAS SURROUNDED YESTERDAY BY AN ENEMY FORCE ESTIMATED AT WELL IN EXCESS OF 6 BATTALIONS AND SUBJECTED TO HEAVY INDIRECT FIRE, WHICH HALTED GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REINFORCE BY HELICOPTER AND WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF CASUALTIES AMONG THE CIVILIAN POPULATION. ENEMY TROOPS PENETRATED THE MARKET PLACE THIS MORNING AND BY EVENING THE ONLY REMAINING FANK POSITION WAS ON THE EASTERN OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN. TWO 105MM ARTILLERY PIECES WERE ABANDONED AFTER REPORTEDLY BEING DESTROYED. A RELIEF FORCE FROM THE NORTH, TWO BATTALIONS FROM THE 45 TH BRIGADE OF THE SEVENTH DIVISION AND ONE BATTALION FROM KOMPONG TRALACH SUBDIVISION, HAD REACHED A POINT ABOUT 2 KILOMETERS FROM THE CITY BY NIGHTFALL.

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2. OUDONG WILL BE A SERIOUS LOSS FOR THE GKR, NOT BECAUSE IT IS THE SEAT OF ONE OF THE MINI-PROVINCES LATELY CREATED BY LON NOL, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE. THE PAGODA IN OUDONG, WHICH WAS ONCE A ROYAL CAPITAL, CONTAINED RELICS HIGHLY PRIZED BY THE BUDDHIST ORDERS. WHOSE LEADERS REPORTEDLY APPEALED YESTERDAY TO LON NOL TO ASSURE THAT THE TOWN DID NOT FALL. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO BUDDHISTS ARE THE STUPAS CONTAINING THE ASHES OF PAST KINGS WHICH ARE LOCATED ON A HILL THREE KILOMETERS SOUTHEAST OF THE TOWN. THIS SITE, WHICH IS GUARDED BY A REINFORCED COMPANY, HAS NOT YET QPQ FM W ENEMY ATTACK.

3. COMMENT. AS IN THE CASE OF KAMPOT, THE KC HAVE SEIZED UPON A BADLY DEFENDED OUTPOST TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A VICTORY TO COMPENSATE FOR THEIR FAILURES AROUND PHNOM PENH. PREVIOUS CUTS ON ROUTE 5 BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TOWN, OWTECH MADE RE-INFORCEMENT BY FANK DIFFICULT, AND THE CONTINUED PRESENCE IN THE AREA OF A NUMBER OF ENEMY BATTALIONS ASSEMBLED FROM THREE SEPARATE REGIONS FOR THE PHNOM PENH OFFENSIVE MADE OUDONG A NATURAL TARGET.

4. FANK HAS DECIDED THIS EVENING TO SEND THREE BATTALIONS OF THE 80TH BRIGADE, BY KHMER NAVY CONVOY, EARLY TOMORROW MARCH 19, TO LAND JUST NORTH OF THE WESTERN BEND OF ROUTE FIVE. THE 80TH'S MISSION WILL BE TO LINK UP WITH THE REMAINING FORCES AT THE EASTERN OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN, AND THEN TO RE-TAKE THE TOWN IN A JOINT EFFORT WITH THE RELIEF COLUMN COMING FROM THE NORTH.

5. WE ARE FOLLOWING THE SITUATION CLOSELY AND WILL REPORT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS PROMPTLY.
ENDERS

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NNN

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